

Home Circle.

THE TRIALS OF THE OVERSENSITIVE.

"That dear child is so very sensitive," said a mother, pityingly, as her eleven-year-old daughter, with tear-filled eyes, stumbling out of the room, knocking over a footstool in her haste to be gone. "I am always on the alert to save her. But few days pass in which Ethel does not suffer keenly. Her father and brothers will not always be considerate, and the child's gentle spirit is easily wounded. Now she will cry for a half hour, and be wretched the remainder of the day, and all because papa was vexed that she forgot to call at the post office on her way home from school."

"Is it part of her daily duty to bring home the mail?" I asked.

"Yes," said the mother, a little reluctantly, "but you know how it is with schoolgirls. They are at the age when it is not possible always to remember an engagement. Their little lives are so full of pleasures, and they have not yet learned to assume cares, these little girls. I tell papa that Ethel will be more thoughtful by and by, and that we cannot expect as much steadiness of her as of her great, strong brothers."

This golden-haired, beautiful Ethel, her one daughter and her youngest child, was the darling of my friend's heart and the very apple of her eye. She lingered about a few moments, restless and uncomfortable, and then stole out of the room, and presently I heard her moving about overhead in Ethel's pretty little chamber. Down the street I caught from the window a glimpse of papa, whose hasty speech had wrought the mischief. His broad back and plodding steps seemed pathetic to me, as I thought how tired he was after his day's work, and knew that he was wending his way to the post office to perform Ethel's neglected errand. Everybody made to feel more or less in the wrong because one petted child had been reprov'd, and had gone off grieved in consequence! It did not appear quite fair.

It was not of Ethel's little fit of the sulks nor of her mother's mistaken tenderness that I thought longest on that sweet autumnal afternoon, for one thought starts another, and I recalled this person and that, who had gone much beyond childhood, enduring keen and often needless anguish because of a disposition too readily sensitive to blame or fancied unkindness. Such a disposition torments its possessor, inflicting pain to which the blows of a whip would be light by comparison, yet, strange to say, it would al-

most appear that the unfortunately oversensitive person watches for slights and welcomes wounds, so often are they received when none are intended.

In the family the opportunities for hurting the sensibilities of the easily injured one are manifold. A chance word at the table, a word unsaid when praise or compliment was desired, a bit of criticism however gentle, an absent or preoccupied look, will upset the dear one for the day, and the atmosphere will become electric. It is always the dear one, mother, elder sister, sometimes father or brother—though rarely, for the stronger sex are less given than our to what in children we call tantrums—who feelings are hurt. Singularly, in most households the ill-tempered and pesky are more studied and in effect more beloved than the amiable and sensible. There are gray haired Ethels, who have gone on through long lives, exacting forbearance and consideration from their relatives on the score of their remarkable sensitiveness, and so they will do to the very end.

And in the larger family of the Church, who does not know the brother or the sister whose feet are too easily trodden upon, who withdraws from this and the other department of work, and will no longer support his pastor or continue in fellowship with the friends in the society, hitherto his comrades and trusted companions, because he has been ignored or opposed or wounded? It becomes each of us to ask whether we have never erred in this way, whether we have at no period put a stumbling-block in a brother's road through our jealousy for ourselves.

Oversensitiveness is often the product of a morbid love of self. Vanity takes first at a touch, and vanity is resentful and implacable. Except in the earliest years, outside help avails little to overcome a defect so grave; children may be guided toward a better and happier life, and taught to cultivate the charity that seeketh not her own; but in older persons this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting. If, as may happen, you or I are over sensitive, is it not worth while at once to set about eradicating a fault so grave and with consequences so undesirable in our social intercourse?—*Congregationalist*.

The sorrow for sin which is the effect of heated feeling only will surely die away, and that which proceeds from remorse of conscience is seldom lasting, but the contrition which is lodged in the soul by the Spirit of God nothing can destroy. No length of time can efface, and no sense of pardon can weaken it.—*Bradley*.

SPIRITUAL LIFE.

A vast field is before us when we begin to think or talk about spiritual life. It is so like, and yet so unlike, other kinds of life. It expresses itself so in different ages and different persons. It is not to be confused with religiousness—that is attention to ceremonies and externals—though it often clings to visible supports. It is not correct and exact opinion, though usually founded on certain positive convictions. It is not a manifestation of fervid feeling, though it occasionally shows itself in that form. It may, or it may not, go hand in hand with enterprise and success in business, politics and society. Difficult as it is to define, certain marks betray its presence and power. Wherever you find reverence for things unseen, consideration for others, a humble, loving spirit, you are close upon it. It has always been in the world. There is more of it to-day than ever before, though sometimes it seems to us stagnant or buried.

Yet for ourselves, whose first business it is to look well to our own lives and not to judge others, there are two things to keep in mind. First, that the spiritual life is, after all, in the highest sense the natural life. We feel this in the case of such a man as Dr. A. J. Gordon, for whom so many are mourning. He approached to our ideal of what man should be. It is other men, and not he, who are living the abnormal life—the men who are prostituting their God given talents to low ends, or who, without descending to base deeds are simply allowing the spiritual side of them to become paralyzed. We have heard of scientists who by their own confession had become so immersed in the pursuit of knowledge that faculties and powers meant for God had actually become almost dead. Let us prize as a precious jewel the least seed of spiritual life. Let us believe that unless it grows and flowers we are little better than the brute creation.

On the other hand, while we should try to make our spiritual life simple, natural, and practical, let us remember that it is not natural in the sense that it can take care of itself. It must have careful watching, room to grow, air and sunshine, and a chance to exercise itself. Otherwise it is sure to become stunted or to be crowded one side by the cares and pleasures of this world. The only safety, the only guarantee of growth and maturity, is to keep it in constant contact with the great source of spiritual life, Jesus Christ.—*Congregationalist*.

THE devil has one arm around the man who is trusting in himself.